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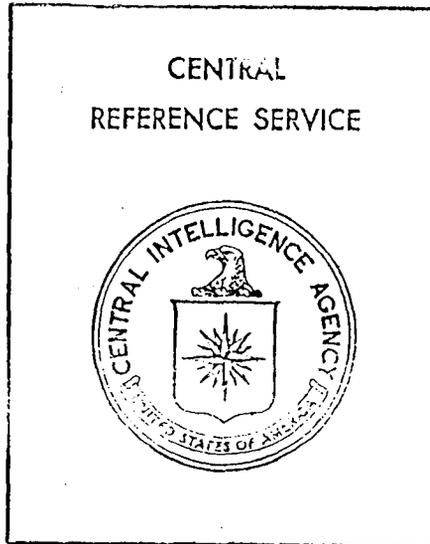
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JAPAN

Yoshio KODAMA

Rightist Leader

Yoshio Kodama (pronounced kohdahmah) is one of the most powerful men in Japan. He was instrumental in founding the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), had a hand in naming several Prime Ministers, and has settled disputes among top businessmen. He commands the allegiance of Japan's ultrarightists and is blood brother to a number of *yakuza* (leaders of the Japanese underworld).



Kodama's power, which he skillfully wields from behind the scenes, rests in his considerable wealth--both monetary and in obligations owed him for past favors. He uses his wealth lavishly to sponsor like-minded politicians and patriotic youth movements and to encourage the martial arts, a military alliance among anti-Communist regimes in Asia, and a revival of the old emperor system.

Living Legend of Ultrationalism

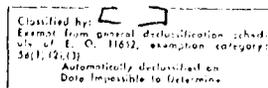
One of the causes to which Kodama has devoted much of his time and money is the rightwing, ultranationalist movement. He joined the movement in his teens, and his name was associated with terrorist incidents and rightist arrests that marked the upsurge of Japanese militarism in the early 1930's. After the outbreak of war with China, Kodama organized an underground agency based in Shanghai to procure strategic material for the Imperial Navy. The Kodama Agency was also involved in smuggling, narcotics trafficking and paramilitary operations. It was through this organ that Kodama accumulated the treasure in

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Yoshio KODAMA (cont.)

gold, platinum, diamonds and radium that has allowed him to support numerous rightwing and anti-Communist groups since World War II.

During the 1960's Kodama headed the Youth Thought Study Society, the top rightist organization in Japan. Established in 1961, the society is composed of 30 rightwing organizations and has an estimated membership of 2,700 men. Kodama led the society in military training exercises in the late 1960's, and his goal of "one man, fifty kills" (in contrast to the "one man for one" motto of the prewar extreme nationalists) has become a rallying slogan for the rightists.

Kodama chose to entrust the leadership of the society to younger activists in July 1970, but he has continued to finance its activities. He hopes that the ultranationalists will consolidate into a federation capable of a decisive confrontation with leftists and labor organizations. He also underwrites the training of a private army that is designed to support regular Japanese forces in case of a Communist uprising. In the past he has also publicized the capability and willingness of the rightists to rescue police when they are unable to control the challenge of the radical leftists.

Backstage Politician

The wealth Kodama accumulated during the war and the prestige he earned in wartime conservative circles also allowed him to play a strong role in postwar politics, both national and international. He was imprisoned as a Class A war crimes suspect after the war but was never brought to trial, and he became politically active after the end of the Occupation. Kodama did much to advance the political careers of his close friends Eisaku Sato, Nobusuke Kishi and Ichiro Hatoyama, all of whom served as Prime Minister. Kodama was deeply involved in the normalization of Japan-Korean

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Yoshio KODAMA (cont.)

relations in the mid-1960's. In 1973, after the Kim Tae-chung kidnaping had thrown relations between the two countries into turmoil, it was Yoshio Kodama that leading LDP politician Yasuhiro Nakasone called upon to suggest solutions for the crisis.

Early Life

Yoshio Kodama was born on 18 February 1911 in Fukushima Prefecture to a family of samurai rank. He received his primary schooling in Tokyo and in Seoul, Korea, where he resided for a time with his sister. For 2 years, while working in a factory in Korea, he attended the Zenrin Commercial School at night. He received no further formal schooling, but he continued his education through private study and is widely read in the social sciences.

Personal Data

Kodama has a simple, direct manner, and he uses straightforward, unadorned language. He has been married twice. In 1935 he married for the first time; this marriage ended in divorce, and in 1940 he married again. He has at least one son and one daughter by his second wife. Kodama is thought to be fluent in a dialect of spoken Chinese. His autobiography, translated into English under the title *I Was Defeated*, has been a best-seller.

29 January 1976

Comments and questions on this report may be directed to *CIA/DDI/CRS, Code 143, ext. 6291.*